

# The US Decision to Invade Iraq in March, 2003, Chasing Phantom WMDs: How Human Intelligence was Used, Abused and Politicized to “fix the facts around the policy.”<sup>1</sup>

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## abstract – D2

The invasion of Iraq on 19 March, 2003 by U.S. military forces was predicated on two primary “*causae belli*,” 1) that the government of Saddam Hussein was pursuing active WMD programs on several fronts, including nuclear and biological, and 2) that he had some secret alliance with Al Qaeda of Osama bin Laden. Both of these claims were proven to be false, but only after a country that had not attacked the United States was devastated, its government destroyed, about 100,000 of its citizens killed in the first year and a long aftermath of civil violence unleashed that has not ended 12 years later. The financial cost to the USA is over \$1 trillion, including health care for our wounded. The cost to our international reputation may be greater in the long run.

After extensive searches of the country finding no WMDs of any consequence, policy people blamed the American Intelligence Community (IC) for shoddy work, while intelligence insiders tended to blame the policy side for insisting on evidence to support what they desired instead of reality. Rank “politicization” of intelligence was revealed when the head of Britain’s MI6 (foreign intelligence) Sir Richard Dearlove reported to his Prime Minister, Tony Blair on 23 July, 2002 that “the intelligence was being fixed around the policy.” That is a concise definition of politicization, which is a cardinal sin among responsible intelligence analysts.

Several analysts from several US agencies objected to how intelligence assessments were being skewed to sell this war. Many suffered bad consequences for their objections, and at least one had her career destroyed even though Valerie Plame Wilson had not said anything in public about her concerns about factual accuracy. Her husband did write something in the New York Times about Niger, where he had once been US Ambassador.<sup>1</sup> Enraged by some truth in print that contradicted the official story in play, some of the men who had distorted intelligence to start with decided to retaliate by exposing her (Plame’s) career in the National Clandestine Service of the CIA working on nuclear non-proliferation, thus putting at real risk her own family and every non-American source she had cultivated over two decades of work. US and global security were also wounded.

Everyone involved was a human being, from analysts, Vice Presidents and Undersecretaries of Defense, to soldiers, agents, and sources in the field, to thousands of children blown to bits or orphaned by this arguably illegal and immoral war. This paper will focus on how that affected intelligence agents and agencies involved. System level effects on HUMINT operators, sources and networks will be discussed. The role of an “Office of Special Plans” will be detailed, which was created in the Pentagon to bypass quality controls at the CIA and elsewhere in the US-IC. Basically politicians mandated reliance on unvetted and extremely unreliable single sources like “Curveball” in Germany, even after warnings from Germany’s BND. Finally, some comparisons will be made with the failure of early warning in Israel prior to the Yom Kippur War of 1973. In that case Mossad (foreign) and Aman (military intelligence) analysts were blinking red alerts, but the politicians could not believe that attack was coming due to group-think and related problems.

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<sup>1</sup> This was how Great Britain’s Head of MI6, Sir Richard Dearlove, described politicization in Washington D.C. when he reported to his Prime Minister’s Cabinet on 23 July, 2002. The decision to invade Iraq had been made long before. Now the Bush Administration was ‘fixing facts’ to sell this to the US Congress, and they hoped to the UN.

## The Office of Special Plans

The Office of Special Plans (hereafter OSP) was just the most important node of a network of intelligence entities created by a cabal of what some call “neoconservatives” or “neocons” who were already devoted to invading Iraq again as soon as their plan could be sold to enough U.S. Congressmen and they hoped, to the United Nations. This OSP was created by Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith, who reported to Deputy Director Paul Wolfowitz, who reported to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who reported in theory to President George Bush but more accurately to the Darth Vader of this story, Vice President Dick Cheney. All of these people can be shown to have supported a second invasion of Iraq within days or weeks after 9/11/2001 (the first US war with Iraq started in 1991 after Iraq invaded Kuwait). Vice Presidents cannot order America to war, so some serious rationale backed by evidence would be necessary to sell this war to Congress, the American people, and they hoped to the United Nations.<sup>ii, iii</sup>

In their minds, the OSP was tasked just to review raw Iraq intelligence coming into the IC to find nuggets of information that might have been overlooked initially, especially regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs). In the minds of objective observers like Sir. Richard Dearlove, head of Britain’s MI6, and many people at the CIA and State Department, this Pentagon office was really designed to bypass the normal, interagency review process that exists to prevent errors of fact or analysis from appearing on the President’s desk or in formal, “finished intelligence” products like an NIE.<sup>iv</sup> A “backdoor” had been created to funnel unchecked intelligence allegations directly to President George W. Bush via his gatekeeper and minder, Dick Cheney.

Professional analysts call this logically flawed process “cherry picking” where a large mass of all-source information is culled to find nuggets that support a predetermined conclusion or policy position. If analysts or an analytic institution accepts any evidence that supports a position, and rejects any evidence that contradicts that position, it is tragically easy for people to convince themselves of almost anything, which is why the interagency review process was established.

After invading Iraq on 19 March, 2003, destroying its government and many over 100,000 of its people, no WMDs of any consequence were found, nor any evidence of collusion between Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden, or Iraq and Al Qaeda. This prompted inquiries in the U.S. and Britain, some of which like the Chilcot Report, while finished in 2011, have not yet been made public, allegedly because the American IC wants this report to remain secret forever.<sup>v</sup> The Independent newspaper of London reported this about the Chilcot Report on 7 April, 2013:

“Hitherto unseen evidence given to the Chilcot Inquiry by British intelligence has revealed that former Prime Minister Tony Blair was told that Iraq had, at most, only a trivial amount of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and that Libya was in this respect a far greater threat.

Intelligence officers have disclosed that just the day before Mr. Blair went to visit president George Bush in April 2002, he appeared to accept this but returned a “changed man” and subsequently ordered the production of dossiers to “find the intelligence” that he wanted to use to justify going to war.”

The most relevant US Senate reports were published in July, 2004 and May, 2007<sup>vi</sup> When the OSP was created, many of the professional analysts in the original staff left because the political pressure to create distorted conclusions was so strong and so completely unprofessional (CIA analysis in particular are trained to “speak truth to power” without fear or favor, but they were

often excluded from this office, and DIA officers who objected to politicization of intelligence were transferred or pressured out). One of the best public sources on the politicization of this office was an Air Force intelligence officer who did not leave, but stayed in despite her growing dismay at the fundamentally improper and unprofessional processes she witnessed.

Air Force Lt. Col. Karen Kwiatkowski wrote extensively about this after the fact when she retired. She observed, for example, that: “I witnessed neoconservative agenda bearers within the OSP usurp measured and carefully considered assessments, and through suppression and distortion of intelligence analysis promulgate what were in fact falsehoods to both Congress and the executive office of the President.” <sup>vii</sup>

A separate section will focus on how such practices affect actual intelligence professionals, but it bears highlighting here that when second rate political managers drive out first rate analysts, and replace them with 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> rate hacks who will write whatever they are told to and find what they know the bosses want, any degree of intelligence catastrophe can follow including war crimes.

The OSP was preceded by other shadowy groups discussed by yet another Senate Report after the fact. <sup>viii</sup> Ringleaders in that effort included two people who were deeply involved in the Iran-Contra scandal of the mid-1980's. They were Iranian expatriate arms dealer and spy Manucher Ghorbanifar, and US citizen Michael Ledeen who once worked for the US Department of Defense but was let go because of dual loyalties to another country and a habit of constantly pitching multi-million dollar proposals to run operations against Iran. Ghorbanifar had been a former officer in SAVAK, the brutal intelligence arm of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's Iran, so he had good reasons to hate the current government of militant mullahs who deposed the Shah. But the CIA had also issued a “burn notice” against Ghorbanifar in 1984, due to criminal acts in service to a third country. Mr. Ledeen also had many connections in Italian intelligence circles and is a lead suspect in the question of “who forged a letter alleging yellowcake sales to Iraq?” Whether Ledeen was indeed the forger, or whether he was involved in getting this letter to SISME (Italian intelligence) and then to America's IC is far less important for this review than recognizing that SOMEONE forged the letter, and got it to the President of the United States eyes despite obvious and profound flaws. That forger had a strong desire to start another war between the United States and Iraq. Given how such things are accomplished, the forger almost had to be connected with some national intelligence entity also, not necessarily or even probably American.

### **Curveball and Allegations of Biological Weapons**

Having cooked the intelligence books to support a war the White House had desired for years prior, the Secretary of State, General Colin Powell, was tasked to deliver a plea to the United Nations to join the crusade. Powell calls that speech his darkest hour now, since almost every claim he made there turned out to be false, despite spending three days at CIA asking for evidence until that agency's director George Tenet told him that the evidence was “slam dunk” solid. But General Powell was not able to actually see most of the data or any key sources. In fact several of those sources were never seen by any U.S. intelligence professional. An example is “Curveball” who alleged that Iraq had built and deployed “mobile biological weapons factories.”

Curveball was an appropriate codename for an Iraqi citizen who had defected to Germany. He alleged that he was a former chemical engineer (probably true) but tried to trade exotic secrets for money and privileges. The BND (German foreign intelligence) concluded that he was a “drunken fabricator” and put out a “don’t trust this guy” warning (burn notice) that went directly to CIA and other US intelligence entities. Such warnings are common among intelligence agencies because they deal with many seamy people with hidden agendas and large appetites for money. Despite this warning, the unconfirmed allegation was passed through the back door provided by the OSP directly to President Bush without any corroboration of any kind, and despite 180 degree contradictions of prior testimony from people who actually had worked on Iraq’s early biological weapons programs, like their director, Iraqi General Hussein Kamel al-Majid who defected to Jordan in 1995. The General claimed, and provided evidence that such programs had been dismantled after the 1991 Gulf War and resulting inspections by the UN.

Another CIA veteran, once Director of European Operations Tyler Drumheller, said that before the war one of Saddam Hussein’s own ministers (Foreign Minister Naji Sabri) had also confirmed to American intelligence that the Iraqis had not stockpiled weapons of mass destruction. So Mr. Drumheller wrote a book (long after the war of course) and publicly asserted that President George W. Bush’s administration had knowingly hyped fabricated evidence of Iraq’s arsenal of biological weapons to justify the 2003 invasion.<sup>ix, x</sup> True, but timing is essential in such things.

In professional NIE’s (National Intelligence Estimates) cautions or “caveats” like the warning about Curveball from BND are usually included in footnotes at least, but no such nuances reached the US President, as intended by the cabal that manipulated him. There were other examples, like an allegation that aluminum tubes had been purchased by the regime to make into centrifuges for refining uranium. US Department of Energy specialists who actually design and make centrifuges said these looked nothing like what they use, but rather like blanks for artillery shells (which in the end, they proved to be). But their reservations were also excluded from what the President or Congress saw during the efforts to sell this war. As with Curveball, the original source was never even seen by U.S. intelligence, much less cross examined, but rather he was held by a foreign intelligence service not named in the Senate review reports to follow.

But the most egregious manipulation of intelligence including felony crime committed against a true US intelligence professional who objected to allegations of yellowcake sales in Niger.

### **Yellowcake in Niger, and a Fraudulent Letter Sold as Intelligence Gold**

Another allegation made by Secretary of State Colin Powell at the UN was that Saddam Hussein’s Iraq had purchased tons of uranium “yellowcake” from Niger. Yellowcake is a precursor form of uranium to be enriched to either run nuclear power plants or to create nuclear explosives. Powell said that these claims were backed by “multiple sources” and “hard evidence.” But in fact, the principle evidence for this was a letter given by someone to Italian intelligence (SISME) which passed it to the CIA. The letter was in fact a crude forgery, almost instantly detected by skeptical minds at the United Nations, and by sceptics at the CIA who deal with misinformation, disinformation and political manipulations of information every day.

Their objections were suppressed by the Vice President's information manipulators, but enough concern was generated at CIA to authorize a secret fact finding mission to Niger by a former US Ambassador to Niger, Joseph Wilson. So he went to Africa, talked with his many government contacts there, and perhaps more cogently to officials of the French companies who actually mined the uranium and made the yellowcake. They said the claim was ridiculous and that there was no way such a large amount of commercial product could just disappear from their records.

So Joe Wilson wrote an op-ed for the New York Times, published on 6 July, 2003 titled "What I Didn't Find in Africa." He laid out his evidence that the rumor of yellowcake sales to Iraq was false. This enraged the information managers in the Office of Vice President Dick Cheney, who decided to retaliate in a novel way. They did not engage the substance of Wilson's essay. Rather they revealed the identity of his wife, Valerie Plame Wilson, and her decades of work for the CIA on counter (WMD) proliferation issues to at least six reporters, one of whom published it (Robert Novak). This put her entire family at risk, and even more, every source she had developed in numerous trips throughout the Middle East and beyond. Revealing identities of active intelligence officers at CIA in particular is a felony crime in the United States. The FBI investigated up to and including interviews with VP Cheney and President Bush, but concluded that court ready evidence could only be produced to convict Cheney's Chief of Staff, Irve L. "Scooter" Libby who was convicted of several crimes. Libby's sentence was promptly commuted by President Bush.<sup>xi</sup>

This story is so egregious and un-American that Valerie Plame Wilson's book about it "Fair Game" was turned into a successful Hollywood movie of the same name<sup>xii, xiii</sup>

In this way the career of one US intelligence professional was destroyed because of her husband's attempts to correct falsified intelligence of great consequence through democratic process. US security was gravely wounded and thousands of our troops were killed, but of course casualties and destruction of Iraq were much worse. Other intelligence professionals notice when one is destroyed by their own administration. Better people decide it's time to leave. They are replaced by people with less moral scruples or less ability to detect bullshit in the information stream, or both. Liaison relationships even with close allies are also disturbed when they see that we won't keep even the identities of our OWN clandestine agents secret, much less some other country's. Sources overseas also dry up when they see other sources arrested and punished because our CIA or some other IC element sacrificed their anonymity to internal political squabbling.

### **Torture, Renditions and other Bad Consequences, like Maybe One Million Dead,<sup>xiv</sup> a Nation Destroyed, and a Thousand Billion Dollars Poured into Desert Sand to Kill Them**

The most pernicious effect of politicizing national security intelligence to evade oversight or rule of law in general is the pervasive lawlessness that often results. It is very difficult to keep torture contained, for example, once you have rationalized it for your 'worst case' scenarios. Someone always wants 'actionable intelligence' bad enough to bend rules once it is clear that leadership approves. And a handful of 'high value' detainees quickly becomes almost anyone you have imprisoned. In Iraq, the US harvested grotesque scandals like the Abu Ghraib affair,<sup>xv</sup> and abductions of innocent people in allied countries like the Arar Maher case in Canada, the Khalid El-Masri case in Germany, and the Abu Omar case in Italy. The first two ultimately got legal relief in their home countries after being kidnapped by CIA agents and tortured in third countries until our agents realized they were innocent. El-Masri just had a name similar to another man.

Abu Omar is more complicated, because he was involved in some truly bad things, but rather than arrest and try him, he was kidnapped and tortured. Abducting Omar off an Italian street got 26 US CIA personnel indicted, and the chief of station had to flee to avoid arrest (Robert Seldon Lady). He cannot safely return to Europe now, a real consequence for him, and his name and face are known, ending his life of adventure as a spy. Several Italian SISME agents who helped them were convicted of felony crimes for doing so. Who helps a foreign power abduct their own citizens?

Intelligence analysts, assets and operators often work on the edges of legal conduct anyway, as their country defines that. Breaking laws of other countries is routine. They are, after all, SPIES. American intelligence officers already break serious laws of other countries over 100,000 times each year according to a Congressional study.<sup>xvi</sup> But in theory, they are never supposed to break US laws, like the absolute prohibition on torture found in Title 18, Part 1 Chapter 113C of the U.S. Code, and in the UN Convention Against Torture which we ratified and largely wrote.<sup>xvii</sup>

Having decided to invade and destroy a country that did not attack us, this cabal of aggressive neocons set out to reshape the entire Middle East.<sup>xviii</sup> They decided to disregard international law entirely, and conducted an aggressive campaign to abduct alleged terrorists anywhere, and to “rendition” many to countries or “black sites” where they could be interrogated without restraints. Human Rights First reported that 98 of these prisoners died in custody, and that even the U.S. government considered 34 of these to be “probable homicides.”<sup>xix</sup> One particularly egregious case involved a totally innocent taxi driver in Afghanistan, who was beaten to death trying to extract information he did not have. That case is well described in the 2007 Academy Award Winning Documentary “Taxi to the Dark Side.”<sup>xx</sup> Defenders of such conduct often distinguish between prisoners tortured by the Army, those tortured by the CIA or by its contractors, and those tortured in other countries where the CIA took them to be tortured. Such hair-splitting employs many attorneys, but the net effect is pervasive and corrupting. What difference does it make to a man who is tortured (or to his family) which unit, agency or country is doing such evils to him?

After many reviews, President Barak Obama promised to end the rendition and torture programs in 2008. Whether he actually did this or not is in great dispute. He promised to close the special prison at Guantanamo, Cuba also where some torture techniques were refined, but this has not occurred. One system effect on intelligence employees is illumined by the fact that none of the CIA people who authorized, rationalized,<sup>xxi</sup> or committed the many abuses involved was ever indicted, prosecuted or sanctioned in any known way.<sup>xxii</sup> A few very low level Army prison guards (a.k.a. privates and sergeants) were jailed for acts at Abu Ghraib and elsewhere. But the only CIA person sanctioned was the one CIA employee who confirmed to a reporter that his agency was engaged in kidnapping and torturing people around the world<sup>xxiii</sup> (John Kiriakou served a 3 year sentence for revealing classified information and had his career, if not life destroyed). The bureaucratic reality is that the people who get punished are the ones with rare moral courage who speak out about evil. Bureaucrats who do whatever power wants get well paid, and thugs employed to beat, waterboard, and occasionally kill prisoners get promoted, like Jose Rodriguez, Jr. who became Deputy Director of the CIA for its National Clandestine Service. His memoir “Hard Choices” describes his reasons for destroying evidence about waterboarding in particular.<sup>xxiv</sup>

Considering all consequences, these are true moral dilemmas for people in those positions – I do not wish to minimize that, nor to imply that there is no room for legitimate, informed and sincere differences of opinion about them. Many dilemmas that spies confront involve very rare and very severe circumstances, and are the stuff of “intelligence ethics” a rarely discussed topic.<sup>xxv</sup>

But however you, or courts, adjudicate such moral dilemmas, there are profound effects on the personnel involved, on the agencies they work for, on national reputations and on networks of intelligence collaboration that are increasingly critical to counterintelligence and especially to counterterrorism. Those effects are the topic of the next section, and the core of this paper.

### **Impact on Intelligence Careers, Agencies, Liaison Relations and National Power**

Big lies that result in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of innocent people have profound consequences that I will summarize bluntly here, then exemplify. Participants emerge with damaged souls that eat their vitality and reduce their ability to perform legitimate intelligence functions forever after. Agencies that participate acquire reputations that repel ‘best and brightest’ potential employees, other nations and general publics. Liaison relations are critical for complex, interdisciplinary and existential challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. No one wants to cooperate with psychopathic bullies, which is what spy institutions become when they abandon rule of law.

People who commit torture always wound themselves as well, wound their nation’s reputation, and seldom get good intel anyway. The best critique of torture I know was written by Ali Soufan,<sup>xxvi</sup> the FBI interrogator who actually got the best intelligence from key people like Khalid Sheikh Mohammed from far more effective, and most importantly legal, rapport methods. Then the CIA came in and started torturing their prisoner (183 times according to official CIA comment). That was the end of useful intelligence from that suspect. He cannot even be put on trial today because those who tortured him do not want him to testify in open court about how he was treated. The claim to be just “obeying orders” invokes references to Nuremberg trials and fascist mentalities.

Valerie Plame Wilson’s career was destroyed, and her family and sources abroad were put at risk for the rest of their lives. That blunts collection, and recruitment of agents of any kind overseas. John Kiriakou’s career was destroyed too, and his pension, and his family was gravely damaged; he served 3 years in prison, and must pay for that felony conviction forever in loss of employment and rights to vote, etc. Others resigned from the CIA prematurely in disgust, so the agency loses best and brightest people to be replaced by others with less conscience or less skill, probably both. The impact of memoirs cannot be measured, but it cannot be good for recruitment when good agents write bitter books with titles like “Imperial Hubris”<sup>xxvii</sup> “Inside the CIA’s Dysfunctional Intelligence Culture”<sup>xxviii</sup> “Sleeping With the Devil”<sup>xxix</sup> and “Denial and Deception”<sup>xxx</sup> This is very bad for any agency whose stock in trade is supposed to be “superior intelligence.”

Press coverage gets less positive in a democracy when reporters are harassed for doing their jobs, like NY Times reporter James Risen.<sup>xxxi</sup> Risen was threatened with jail for years trying to get him to testify against a CIA employee who dared reveal a small truth in Risen’s 2006 book “State of War”<sup>xxxii</sup> This book is another good source of data and perspective on manipulation and outright abuse of intelligence to “sell” the invasion of Iraq. Risen was threatened with harsh prosecution for revealing the secret that the government had lied to its own people. Risen’s reply was to write a sequel called “Pay Any Price” which is a detailed expose about the costs of criminality in high office. Books like his, and Frank Rich’s and James Bamford’s “Pretext for War” all erode the country’s reputation abroad, and reduce the quality of people seeking jobs at US secret agencies. But they did not do the tortures, or invade innocent countries under false

pretenses, the USA did, with help from intelligence employees who chose career advancement over the Constitution.

Corruption like this tends to spread to other professions, like medicine and psychology. Torture teams often included doctors and psychologists, prompting responses such as when the American Psychological Association voted 157-1 to consider working for any US intelligence interrogation incompatible with their professional code of ethics on 7 August, 2015, and to prohibit members from doing so.<sup>xxxiii</sup> The single dissenting vote was from a former government employee involved in the torture programs. MD and bioethicist Steven Miles wrote a scathing review of the larger corruption of health professions that results called “Oath Betrayed.”<sup>xxxiv</sup> All these things add up.

The CIA’s former Station Chief in Italy is not the only US official or employee who can no longer travel abroad freely. Robert Delahunty, an otherwise obscure coauthor of one of the more infamous memos that were used to rationalize torture as legal also cannot travel to Europe, at least, because he may be arrested if he does, and rendered to the World Court at The Hague for prosecution for crimes against humanity. There are many more prominent former US officials who share this problem, like Vice President Dick Cheney in particular. Many attorneys in the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice, under Attorney General Alberto Gonzales were employed to wordsmith around crystal clear international and US national laws prohibiting torture without any exceptions.<sup>xxxv</sup> Delahunty’s special contribution was to conclude that US Presidents are not actually bound by ANY international laws when engaged in war. If followed, this precedent would undermine centuries of trying to reduce the barbarity of war by rule of law. The reputation of government attorneys is damaged, as is the very concept of rule of law.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

These derivative consequences all flowed from the original sin of starting an illegal and immoral war. In the case of Iraq in 2003, that required distorting professional intelligence collection and analysis into mere propaganda. And that depended on suppressing truth, even within the official intelligence community, and punishing anyone who dared to reveal the crimes, inside or out. These are fundamentally un-American activities, specifically proscribed by the US Constitution.

One more case deserves special mention. One U.S. Army intelligence private was so appalled by some of the things he saw, that he stole and released a number of documents in 2003 to Wikileaks and the world. The most famous is known as “Collateral Damage” or “Collateral Murder.”<sup>xxxvii</sup> This is a video that shows two US helicopter gunships killing a dozen innocent people including two Reuters reporters, and injuring many others including two children in a car that came to help the victims. The private’s name was Bradley Manning.<sup>xxxviii</sup> He now lives in a military prison under sentence of 35 years for revealing classified information (a.k.a. a war crime in this case). Manning was recently punished for violating military prison rules, having in his possession some toothpaste past its ‘use by’ date, and a Vanity Fair magazine with Caitlyn Jenner on the cover.<sup>xxxix</sup> His sentence for those transgressions was 21 days without privileges (like using the library, or one hour exercise every day) but he could have been sentenced to solitary confinement for life. Such is justice in America today, where you can get medals and money for murdering innocent people abroad, but can also get life in prison for telling American citizens the truth about that.

### **A Brief Parallel with Israel’s IC before the Yom Kippur War of 1973**



There are many other historic cases of serious intelligence failures, like the failure of the CIA to anticipate the explosion of a nuclear warhead by India in 1974, the fall of the Shah of Iran in 1979, and the disintegration of the Soviet Union into 15 states in 1991. One common theme is something called “groupthink” which is not the same as deliberate politicization of assessments. These processes can interact. Here is another example from a different country to exemplify the special dangers of groupthink, which is especially difficult in intelligence systems because of their closed information flows and tendency to confuse dissent with either ignorance or treason.

Israel has some of the best intelligence agencies in the world, including the MOSSAD for foreign intelligence, Aman for military intelligence, and an agency for internal security that has gone by many names over recent decades (GSS, Shin Bet, SHABEK). Surrounded by enemies and potential enemies, they have the best reasons to take intelligence very seriously. Despite that, and despite an overwhelming victory against their neighbors in the 1967 war, Israel was surprised by an attack by Egyptian and Syrian forces in 1973 called the “Yom Kippur” War.

Ephraim Kahana, in his “Historical Dictionary of Israeli Intelligence” writes: “The launching of the Yom Kippur War in October 1973 took Israel wholly by surprise and placed the country’s security—and even its survival—in jeopardy. ... Much of the blame fell on the shoulders of the intelligence community, which was charged with not accurately assessing distinct information that Egypt and Syria planned to go to war on 6 October, 1973.”<sup>xi</sup> In the final analysis, many conclude that such evidence existed but was rejected, either by intelligence personnel for early warning, or by political deciders, because they simply could not imagine actually being attacked by two countries that Israel had soundly defeated just six years before.

Kahana’s work is dry history without moral judgments arranged as a dictionary. It is a great resource, but a better window on the internal workings and psychology of MOSSAD is “Guideon’s Spies” by Gordon Thomas.<sup>xli</sup> He reveals as few do how totally sincere and undoubtedly brilliant people can be confused by the pervasive secrecy of most intelligence organizations into missing obvious things, or reach stunningly inaccurate assessments, because the ability to check facts and correct errors is so constrained in secret power systems. There are very few people allowed in the super-secret SCIFs (secure, compartmented information facilities). These chosen few tend to share the same assumptions, often share the same only partly accurate information, the bias toward secret rather than open information. Political and bureaucratic pressures are also pervasive, and critics tend to be systematically excluded as “security risks” who might reveal the precious secrets. So those who best detect bullshit are often excluded from the “cleared” crew, and phenomenal errors can occur. Like not noticing you are about to be attacked by massed forces (Yom Kippur) or letting delusions of power overwhelm prudence so that you attack an innocent country for phony reasons (Iraq II). The real reasons we attacked Iraq in 2003 are almost never discussed publicly, but that is another long story.

## Conclusions

For a business filled with deceptions and betrayal, leavened by occasional dismemberment or death, professional national security intelligence is remarkably dependent on trust. Sources trust their handlers or case officers with their lives in many cases, since to be revealed as a traitor to dictators often results in death, torture, sometimes torture and death to family members also.

Handlers and their agencies attend very carefully to how trustworthy sources are, because false or inaccurate information in life and death crises can have life or death consequences for thousands of people. Policy people and other bosses want to trust their intelligence agencies and agents, because without professional intelligence support they may fail in terrible ways. Yet all this trust must be negotiated among people who often lie for a living. One Israeli scholar/practitioner put it thus: “Even if expected to lie every day to the entire world, Israeli intelligence officers are expected to tell perfect, unvarnished truth to their superiors.”

In the final analysis, every one of them is a human being, and all but a few started their careers with the best of intentions to do good for their countries at least. But they also work in toxic environments that corrode such good intentions, both in the field and more important to this analysis, in bureaucracies that have been immersed in those toxic environments for decades.

There is a special problem here that I can barely touch on in the space available. Espionage often attracts psychopathic personalities. And at least some intelligence agencies specifically encourage those because “they make better spies” “if they can be controlled.”<sup>xlii</sup> Some specialties like counterintelligence also attract disturbed personalities, and continuous use of some aspects of “tradecraft” actually induces mental illness in a large fraction of participants.<sup>xliii</sup>

It is well established in social psychology that if you put ‘good people’ into a ‘bad system’ many of them can be induced to start acting very badly, very quickly.<sup>xliv</sup> Systems matter, a lot, and organizational evil is often more difficult to deal with than individual evils.

These are other, huge problems with official intelligence today. What does the case of pre-war intelligence leading to the invasion of Iraq in March, 2003 three provide for conclusions?

1. A cabal of “neocons” and other vested interested was able to bring falsified intelligence directly to a U.S. President’s desk, and to maintain those falsehoods over months despite determined efforts by some others in the official American IC to show they were wrong.
2. This “success” was only possible because of relentless suppression of dissenting views within those 17 agencies, and compliance with the party line by employees who chose loyalty to their agency and security clearance contracts over their oaths to protect and defend the U.S. Constitution. This was compounded by subsequent suppression of reporters who tried to provide safe ways for insiders to reveal what they knew to the public which, in theory, is the ultimate source of political legitimacy in the U.S.A.
3. Actual official oversight of US intelligence is pathetically weak, despite endless proclamations to the contrary.
4. Potential Solutions include:
  - a. A thorough overhaul of the bloated classification system, which everyone knows is obscenely obese, covers embarrassing mistakes more than legitimate national security secrets, costs a fortune to administer, and slows down legitimate analysis. A thorough review of how and why to do this called the Moynihan Report of 1996 sits in government libraries ready for implementation.<sup>xlv</sup>

- b. Reform of the recruitment and training programs to account for the fact (which will not change) that espionage attracts psychopathic personalities, who bring some advantages due to their indifference to normal ethics and exceptional skills at lying and manipulating people. Once in, they tend to rise fast and to change the bureaucratic rules of admission to reinforce those advantages and to keep potential critics out.
- c. Real “Whistleblower Protection” legislation could help a lot. Such protection exists for most federal employees in America, but intelligence personnel are specifically exempted. Thus when ethical insiders with moral courage dare to stick their necks out, those are cut off as they are promptly prosecuted, often silenced by prison terms, and always lose their careers since security clearances are yanked. Over time, this reduces the moral character of the agency which “cleanses itself” of moral thought. That reduces the accuracy of analysis, the probity of policy, the wisdom of politicians and the courage of real warriors dedicated to protection of the innocent for all.

The end state of this degenerative process is commonly called the “police-state.” One exceptional description of that is found in a movie rather than scientific literature, produced in 2006, called “The Lives of Others” or in original “Der Leben das Anderen.” This film received the Academy Award of 2006 for best foreign film.<sup>xlvi</sup> It describes living conditions in the old East Germany, where the internal security service called the “Stasi” more or less forced one-tenth of the population to spy on the rest of the population, and everyone was suspect of disloyalty including rivals in the security bureaucracies themselves. Once you let your security services become dominated by paranoid psychopathic personalities (like James Jesus Angleton, for another historic example) you are liable to inherit a “Legacy of Ashes” as described by New York Times reporter Tim Weiner.<sup>xlvi</sup>,<sup>xlvi</sup>

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pungent op-ed pointed out that a key rumor that Saddam's Iraq had purchased tons of uranium "yellowcake" from Niger, alleged in the run up to the invasion in March, was almost certainly false, based on his experience as Ambassador to Niger and results of a personal investigation of that rumor in country for the CIA in 2002. The UN concluded that a letter supporting that rumor was an obvious forgery. But it was cited by President Bush to the US Congress and by Secretary of State Colin Powell in his address to the UN.

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<sup>i</sup> "What I Didn't Find in Africa," by Joseph Wilson, in The New York Times, 6 July, 2003. This pungent op-ed pointed out that a key rumor that Saddam Hussein's Iraq had purchased tons of "yellowcake" from Niger (a form of uranium prior to enrichment) in the run up to the US invasion in March was almost certainly false, based on his experience as Ambassador to Niger and results of a personal investigation of that rumor in that country for the CIA in 2002. The rumor was reported as fact in both President Bush's speech to the US Congress on 28 January, 2003, and Colin Powell's presentation to the UN on 5 February, 2003, each seeking support for initiating war against Iraq.

<sup>ii</sup> The Greatest Story Ever Sold: the Decline and Fall of Truth in Bush's America, by Frank Rich, New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2006.

<sup>iii</sup> A Pretext for War: 9/11, Iraq, and the Abuse of America's Intelligence Agencies, by James Bamford, New York, NY: Anchor Books, division of Random House, 2005. While Rich's book above has a very detailed timeline of events, Bamford's provides more context, so it is well worth reading both if you are an historian of this conflict, or an intelligence professional eager to avoid trillion dollar mistakes with bloody consequences all around. In fact, people have not stopped dying in Iraq from wholesale violence ever since.

<sup>iv</sup> This bad example of NIEs was produced in weeks instead of the normal months or years, and released internally in October of 2002 (NIE 2002-16HC, October 2002, "Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction"). Like most other intelligence products on that area produced during this time, This NIE's conclusions were starkly inaccurate. But these were the data passed on to President George Bush, the Congress, and ultimately the UN. Unlike many more accurate NIEs on many topics, this one remains classified and therefore shielded from detailed examination by polite society about how scores of thousands of career employees in America's 17 intelligence agencies could make such fundamental errors to support an arguably illegal and immoral war.

<sup>v</sup> "White House in Chilcot 'cover-up': America bans crucial files that could reveal secret of why Blair invaded Iraq," by Glen Owen, The Daily Mail, UK, 22 August, 2015. Accessible at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3207437/White-House-Chilcot-cover-America-bans-crucial-files-reveal-secret-Blair-invaded-Iraq.html>

<sup>vi</sup> Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence on the U.S. Intelligence Community's Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq, Vol. I was published on 9 July, 2004 and Vol. II on how policy leaders used pre-war intelligence was published on 25 May, 2007. But the most important and relevant section was redacted, on how Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith manipulated his OSP to cook the intelligence books in favor of a predetermined policy of invading Iraq, and if that went well, six other countries as reported by retired General Wesley Clark. Clark reported to the world that he had been told at the Pentagon on or near 20 September, 2001 that the decision had been made "upstairs" to attack not just Iraq, but seven Middle Eastern and North African countries in succession, including Lebanon, Syria, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and ultimately Iran. General Clark's actual words on this to a reporter for Democracy Now can be seen at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8FhZnFZ6TY>

<sup>vii</sup> "The New Pentagon Papers," by Karen Kwiatkowski, US Air Force Lt. Col. (ret.) is a 10 March, 2004 article on Salon.com that can be accessed at: [http://www.salon.com/2004/03/10/osp\\_moveon/](http://www.salon.com/2004/03/10/osp_moveon/). She explodes many myths.

<sup>viii</sup> Report on Intelligence Activities Relating to Iraq Conducted by the Policy Counterterrorism Evaluation Group and the Office of Special Plans within the Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy, June 5, 2008. Accessible at: <http://www.intelligence.senate.gov/sites/default/files/publications/110346.pdf>

<sup>ix</sup> On the Brink: An Insider's Account of how the White House Compromised American Intelligence, by Tyler Drumheller and Elaine Monaghan, New York, NY: Carroll & Graf, 2006.

<sup>x</sup> "Tyler Drumheller, ex-CIA Official Who Disputed Bush, Dies at 63," in The New York Times, 9 August, 2015.

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<sup>xi</sup> “Statement by the President on Executive Clemency for Lewis Libby,” 2 July, 2007, accessible at:

<http://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2007/07/20070702-3.html>

<sup>xii</sup> *Fair Game: How a Top CIA Agent Was Betrayed by Her Own Government*, by Valerie Plame Wilson, New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2008.

<sup>xiii</sup> *Fair Game*, the movie was produced by River Road Entertainment in 2010 and won the “Freedom of Expression Award” from the US National Board of Film Review.

<sup>xiv</sup> Carefully considered estimates of casualties in Iraq from this war actually range from over 100,000 to over 1 million, depending largely on counting rules, but you’d never know this from Pentagon press releases. They always use the lowest possible number. An example of the higher estimates comes from career CIA analyst Ray McGovern as cited in “Iraq: ‘A War Crime, Pure and Simple’” by Dahr Jamail, in Truthout, August 10, 2015 accessible at: <http://www.truth-out.org/news/item/32266-iraq-a-war-crime-pure-and-simple>. Jamail reviews critics of the pre-war intelligence including retired US intelligence professionals like 25 year CIA analyst (and before that US Army officer) Ray McGovern. “In McGovern’s view, the US played the key role in destroying the country of Iraq and is responsible for the more than one million Iraqi dead because of the war, several million wounded, more than two million Iraqi refugees into neighboring countries, three million internal refugees, and he said that what the US did in Iraq is “A war crime, pure and simple.””

<sup>xv</sup> *The Abu Ghraib Investigations: The Official Reports of the Independent Panel and the Pentagon on the Shocking Prisoner Abuse in Iraq*, edited by Steven Strasser. New York, NY: Public Affairs LLC, 2004. The primary Pentagon report on this is called the “Taguba Report” after its author, Lt. General Antonio Taguba, released on 4 June, 2004.

<sup>xvi</sup> In 1996 a U.S. House of Representatives Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence Report titled “IC 21: Intelligence Community in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century,” Chapter IX, page 205, one finds that: “A safe estimate is that several hundred times every day (easily 100,000 times a year) DO [CIA Directorate of Operations] officers engage in highly illegal activities (according to foreign law) that not only risk political embarrassment to the US but also endanger the freedom if not lives of the participating foreign nationals and, more than occasionally, of the clandestine officer himself.” This Report can be read at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/GPO-IC21/content-detail.html>.

<sup>xvii</sup> The full text of the “UN Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment” can be read at: <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/cat.html>

<sup>xviii</sup> Former NATO Commander and US General Wesley Clark reported to “Democracy Now” on 2 March, 2007 that another General at the Pentagon he had worked closely with advised him that a plan had been approved “upstairs” to attack seven Middle Eastern countries in succession to remake the map of the Middle East using 9/11 as an excuse. The full text of that interview is well worth pondering: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8FhZnFZ6TY>

<sup>xix</sup> “Command’s Responsibility: Detainee Deaths in U.S. Custody in Iraq and Afghanistan,” by Hina Shamsi, edited by Deborah Pearlstein, a report from Human Rights First published in February, 2006. This report can be seen here: <http://www.humanrightsfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/pdf/06221-etn-hrf-dic-rep-web.pdf>. The opening paragraph claims that: “Since August 2002, nearly 100 detainees have died while in the hands of U.S. officials in the global “war on terror.” According to the U.S. military’s own classifications, 34 of these cases are suspected or confirmed homicides; Human Rights First has identified another 11 in which the facts suggest death as a result of physical abuse or harsh conditions of detention. In close to half the deaths Human Rights First surveyed, the cause of death remains officially undetermined or unannounced. Overall, eight people in U.S. custody were tortured to death.”

<sup>xx</sup> *Taxi to the Dark Side*, written and directed by Alex Gibney, is a documentary produced by a group including the Discovery Channel, Jigsaw Productions and Tall Woods. This documentary won the 2007 U.S. Film Academy Award for Best Documentary, yet was seen by a shockingly small number of people. Reasons for that beg for inquiry.

<sup>xxi</sup> Extensive efforts were made by administration lawyers to rationalize torturing prisoners despite US laws and international treaty obligations specifically prohibiting that under any circumstances without exception (a very rare and high standard in international law). The most notorious of these memos were authored by Office of Special Council attorney John Yoo with various coauthors, like Robert Delahunty. That memo is especially interesting because it concluded that a U.S. President at war is not legally bound by ANY international laws, not just the UN Convention Against Torture. It can be read entire at: <https://www.aclu.org/memo-john-yoo-and-robert-delahunty-regarding-treaties-and-laws-applicable-captured-persons>

<sup>xxii</sup> Some of the people involved in torture policy, execution and rationalization were promoted, but many now enjoy comfortable private sector jobs, like John Yoo, who is today a tenured full Professor of Law at UC Berkeley. Robert Delahunty also got a tenured Professor position at a new University of St. Thomas Law School in St. Paul, MN, USA. He refuses to discuss the torture topic there, claiming “attorney client confidentiality.”

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<sup>xxiii</sup> “Let’s Talk About Torture,” an op-ed in “OtherWords” by John Kiriakou, 13 August, 2015, accessible at:

<http://www.truth-out.org/opinion/item/32338-let-s-talk-about-torture>

<sup>xxiv</sup> Hard Measures: How Aggressive CIA Actions After 9/11 Saved American Lives, by Jose A. Rodriguez, Jr. and Bill Harlow, Threshold Editions, 2013.

<sup>xxv</sup> Ethics of Spying: A Reader for the Intelligence Professional, Vol. 2, by Jan Goldman, New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2010, and Intelligence Ethics, the Definitive Work of 2007\*, edited by Michael Andregg, published by the Ground Zero Center for the Study of Intelligence and Wisdom in 2007.

<sup>xxvi</sup> The Black Banners: The Inside Story of 9/11 and the War Against al-Qaeda, by Ali H. Soufan. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2011.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror, by Michael Scheuer (original published as anonymous) Dulles, VA: Brassey’s Inc., 2004.

<sup>xxviii</sup> The Human Factor: Inside the CIA’s Dysfunctional Intelligence Culture, by Ishmael Jones (an alias). New York, NY: Encounter Books, 2008.

<sup>xxix</sup> Sleeping With the Devil: How Washington Sold Our Soul for Saudi Crude, by Robert Baer. New York, NY: Crown Publishers, 2003.

<sup>xxx</sup> Denial and Deception: An Insider’s View of the CIA from Iran-Contra to 9/11, by Melissa Boyle Mahle. New York, NY: Nation Books, 2004.

<sup>xxxi</sup> State of War: The Secret History of the CIA and the Bush Administration, by James Risen, Free Press, 2006, and Pay Any Price: Greed, Power and Endless War, by James Risen. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014.

<sup>xxxii</sup> The agent that the CIA was out to get was Jeffrey Sterling, who was convicted in May, 2015 for revealing details about a CIA Operation Merlin and was sentenced to 3½ years in prison. Risen never testified against Mr. Sterling, taking great risks to protect his alleged source and first amendment freedoms in general. Having jailed their former employee Sterling, the U.S. government finally decided to stop threatening Mr. Risen for being an honest reporter.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> APA Council Bans Psychologist Participation in National Security Interrogations (by a vote of representatives of 157 to 1), 7 August, 2015, accessible at: <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2015/08/psychologist-interrogations.aspx>

<sup>xxxiv</sup> Oath Betrayed: Torture, Medical Complicity and the War on Terror, by Dr. Steven H. Miles, New York, NY: Random House, 2006.

<sup>xxxv</sup> “Without any exceptions” is a very rare provision in international laws due to how they are negotiated. But the wording of the Convention on Torture and the US laws passed to enforce that are crystal clear in this respect.

<sup>xxxvi</sup> “Treaties and Laws Applicable to the Conflict in Afghanistan Regarding Treatment of Persons Captured by U.S. Armed Forces In that Conflict.” This is a memo From John Yoo and Robert Delahunty to US Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales dated 30 November, 2001. This can be read entire at: <https://www.aclu.org/memo-john-yoo-and-robert-delahunty-regarding-treaties-and-laws-applicable-captured-persons>

<sup>xxxvii</sup> “Collateral Damage” or “Collateral Murder” can be seen in many edited versions. A very good one that shows original footage including audio communications between the two helicopters that killed 12 people after consulting higher command. But it also annotates facts of the matter determined later, such as that two of the men killed worked for Reuters, and that two children in a car that came to help the injured, were themselves shot when the Apache’s assaulted that car also.

<sup>xxxviii</sup> Bradley Manning has changed his name in prison to Chelsea Manning and has requested medical gender change treatments. This very unusual fact has no bearing on the reality or validity of what is shown in the documents and video he released. Those fundamentally show how when you start an illegal and immoral war, hundreds of other war crimes follow, just as the UN described in the foundations of international laws of war.

<sup>xxxix</sup> A Washington Post article on this petty persecution of now prisoner Chelsea Manning can be found at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/08/19/chelsea-manning-found-guilty-for-prison-contraband-vanity-fairs-caitlin-jenner-cover/>, 19 August, 2015.

<sup>xl</sup> Historical Dictionary of Israeli Intelligence, by Ephraim Kahana. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2006.

<sup>xli</sup> Gideon’s Spies: The Secret History of the MOSSAD, by Gordon Thomas. New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 1995, 2007.

<sup>xlii</sup> Personal communication with a retired, career, intelligence agency psychologist whose name and nationality will not be revealed.

<sup>xliii</sup> The CIA refuses to release its data on the topics of mental illness among employees, or what they do with two days of extensive psychological testing required of almost anyone hired by them for career tracks. But if pressed



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the CIA may concede that it has a real problem, just one they don't discuss in public. At least, it has refused to release its internal data to me, but has conceded to me personally that tradecraft and other stresses of the profession do result in higher levels of many psychiatric problems than in the general public. Some are unusual, like multiple personality disorders from maintaining too many false "cover identities" for too long. Former Director Admiral Stansfield Turner got his agency to concede they had high levels of alcoholism and divorce back in 1980. But he also found how magnificently resistant that bureaucracy is to change or deep inquiry!

<sup>xliv</sup> The experiments of Stanly Milgram (Obedience to Authority: An Experimental View, 1963, 1974) and Philip Zimbardo (the Stanford Prison Experiment, 1971, data at: <http://www.prisonexp.org/>) provide shocking proof of this claim that evil systems can induce evil behaviors among otherwise healthy and good individuals. It bears reflection that neither of these seminal inquiries into the real behavior of people in systems could be done in the USA today due to restrictions on use of human subjects, even though none of the participants to our knowledge was injured by these projects that have been cited more than the vast majority of research in psychology. No doubt many subjects were disturbed a bit or more by what they learned about themselves, but we all experience that as we grow up and it is critical for the world to get a grip on organizational evil anyway.

<sup>xlv</sup> The Moynihan Secrecy Commission is shorthand for a bipartisan "Commission on Protecting and Reducing Government Secrecy" chaired by US Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan from 1995 to 1997. The Commission issued its unanimous final report on 3, March, 1997. Its full, book length text can now be accessed at US government document repositories and some libraries.

<sup>xlvi</sup> The Lives of Others, original "Der Leben das Anderen," by Florian Henckel Von Donnersmarck, SONY Pictures Classics, and winner of the US Film Academy Award for Best Foreign Film in 2006.

<sup>xlvii</sup> Legacy of Ashes: The History of the CIA, by Tim Weiner, New York, NY: Doubleday, 2007. Serious scholars would benefit from reading both this book, and former CIA Director George Tenet's book cited below, to see how very differently highly intelligent and very well informed people can interpret the same period of history with emphasis on the case made for war with Iraq in 2003. Tenet is the Director who told Secretary of State Colin Powell that the evidence for WMDs in Iraq was "slam dunk" solid as was the inference of collusion between Iraq and Al Qaeda.

<sup>xlviii</sup> At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA, by George Tenet and Bill Harlow, New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007